

WI News 2012

December ~ We were delighted to welcome Peter Williams to our December meeting. Known locally as "Piano Pete" he had stepped in at short notice when it was found that the choir we were expecting was double booked. We were treated to a wonderful medley of music through the decades and this was followed by a very enjoyable session of carol singing. As it was the 75th anniversary of the Kington St Michael WI, we ended the evening with a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday". Our thanks go to Pete for making it such an enjoyable meeting. Finally, refreshments were served, including a delicious birthday cake and members received their "Secret Santa" gifts.

~ The WI had a stall at the village's Christmas Fayre on December 1st.



Sandra Grace, Margaret Pratley, Jenny Hayne & Louise Williams at the WI stall at the Christmas Fayre on December 1st.

November ~ The subject of our November talk was "The Secret Lives of Garden Birds". Our speaker, John Cromarty, an ornithologist and biologist, had spent his whole life studying and working with birds in various parts of the world, including the Falkland Islands where he was engaged in the Skua Project. With the aid of some outstanding photographs he entertained us with an insight into the lives of blue tits, great tits and the sparrow hawk. We learnt that the territorial robin will fight an intruder to the death and that wrens roost together in large numbers in the winter to keep themselves warm. We were also surprised to learn that both the swift and starling populations are in serious decline in this country as well as the house sparrow. Finally, John encouraged us all to think about how best to help our native birds survive, particularly by feeding them during cold winters and putting up suitable nesting boxes ready for the spring.

October ~ WI Walk, 19.10.12: The day dawned misty with a hint that it might brighten up when 17 intrepid walkers left Willsbridge Mill car park. The path through the woods along Siston Brook was pleasant and we emerged to climb the steps up to the Bristol to Bath Railway path. No

trains in sight but plenty of cyclists to run us over! We resisted the lure of Bitton Station and continued along the path until it met with the River Avon Trail. The river was very fast flowing but fortunately it hadn't flooded the path so we were able to amble along the pathway past a former corn and brass mill, part of the Avon Wharf, to the marina where many narrow boats were moored for the winter. En route we met another group of walkers doing a similar route but in reverse! Just in time we chanced upon the Lockkeepers Inn where we recharged our batteries over lunch. We continued past the Lock and the Fry's Chocolate Factory and across the fields back to Willsbridge Mill. It was a long walk but as it was flat everyone agreed it was a very pleasant way to spend a Friday.

~ At the October meeting, Kim Western, the Manager of Lakeland in Bath, regaled us with humorous anecdotes and gossip from her 17 years with the company, whilst demonstrating various kitchen gadgets. The business, which began in Windermere in the 1960s with a mail order catalogue and progressed to stands at agricultural shows, has now grown to 60 stores throughout the country and a head office employing 3,000 staff. Whilst telling us about the company, Kim managed to bake cupcakes in the new silicone bake ware range and demonstrate how easy it is to use a gadget for preparing a pineapple, right through to cutting it into small chunks and one for de-stoning a mango. It would seem that Lakeland has the right piece of equipment for every household task and much more too.

~ The WI's annual buffet lunch raised £625 for Wiltshire Air Ambulance, which was presented to the charity on September 11th. The group also made £160 from the Flower & Produce show.

September ~ Twenty walkers and friends enjoyed a seven and a half mile walk starting at Corsham Church. A stroll across Corsham Park, with beautiful views of the lake on our right, brought us to a lane and then field tracks lead us into the hamlet of Easton. Old stone stiles and lanes lead us to Byde Mill and onto Gastard, passing old farm houses, quaint cottages and St John the Baptist Church, eventually reaching the Harp and Crown for lunch. A lane and track brought us back to Corsham Park, this time on the other side of the lake.

~ Villager, Malcolm Jago, gave us a fascinating talk on the History of Bath which he illustrated with a collection of slides. We learnt that Bath is the only World Heritage City in England and during the evening Malcolm proceeded to give us an insight into life in Bath from Anglo-Saxon times, to the coming of the Romans and then on to the Georgian and Victorian periods. The three key figures in the history of the city are Ralph Allen, the postmaster and mayor, who owned the bath stone quarry; Beau Nash, who was famous for organizing the entertainment for Bath society in the Georgian era and John Nash and his son, who were responsible for the magnificent architecture of Bath using the beautiful stone quarried on

the hillside. At the end of the talk we all felt that we would see Bath through fresh eyes on our next visit.

August ~ Summer weather was not in our favour for the August walk; leaden skies and outbursts of rain were with us from the start at West Ashton.

The walk was very peaceful, with beautiful views of the Wiltshire Downs. We followed flat paths around fields of wheat and along ancient tracks of the West Wilts Way, White Horse Trail and quiet lanes. We approached the old part of Steeple Ashton with its striking church, picturesque cottages and a lock-up on The Green. Broad country tracks and footbridges over small streams eventually brought us back to West Ashton via the hamlet of East Town.

Flower & Produce Show Results 2012

This year's weather certainly wreaked havoc with the fruit and vegetable entries for the annual Flower & Produce Show, but despite this there was a fine display of mouth-watering entries in the home-baking and preserves section, magnificent handicrafts of all kinds, lovely flowers, and a bumper crop of photographs which were judged to be of a very high standard. Good too to have enthusiastic children submitting entries for their special classes. The trophies were awarded as follows:

Overall winner: Jenny Hayne

WI Trophy for Men: Elfryn Humphreys

Vaughan Cup for Ladies: Pat Woodward

I.K. Alderman Shield for Home Baking & Preserves: Mary Humphreys

WI Vase for Flower Arrangements: Jenny Hayne

Hughes Cup for WI member with most points: Jenny Hayne

Woodward Cup for Photography: Marilyn Logan and Norma Hughes

Novice Cup: Carol Barratt

John Gilbert Cup for under 5 years old: William Andrew

Singer Cup for 5 to 10 years old: Pia Andrew

The WI thanks all who supported the event and the auction, which all helps to fund a special Christmas event for senior citizens.

July ~ WI Walk – Great Bedwyn. The weather on Friday was perfect; not too hot with a hint of a breeze. Eighteen of us met up in The Cross Keys (opened especially for us) in Great Bedwyn for coffee. We set a brisk pace along the canal path stopping to watch the heron and the kingfishers and admire the flowers on the narrow boats. A detour to Crofton Pumping Station allowed the engineers amongst us to indulge in thoughts of times gone past. Across the field to the beautiful village of Wilton and our lunch stop at The Swan. After lunch we stopped to pet the llamas in the field they shared with two horses and a cow before heading up the hill to the restored windmill. From here we took a detour across a farmer's field

when it was realised that we'd missed the proper path, but no problem as it picked up the path through Bedwyn Brail. Another detour followed allowing us to pass through a not so picturesque junk yard but the canal was just along the road and we all made in back to the cars after buying the weekend bread in the local bakery.



*At Great Bedwyn, 27th July '12
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

~ Jo Pocock from Hestercombe Gardens in Somerset was our speaker at the July meeting. The gardens are situated on the southern slopes of the Quantock Hills with wonderful views over the Vale of Taunton. With the aid of slides, Jo told us about the history of the gardens and the reclamation of the Victorian terrace and shrubbery. However, the most interesting part of the lecture centered on the restoration of the Edwardian garden, designed by Sir Edward Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll between 1904 and 1908. Much of this had been made possible by the discovery of original plans found stuffed into a drawer in the potting shed, where they had lain undisturbed for 70 years. The pictures of the beautiful gardens whetted our appetites for a proper visit to see the restoration of Hestercombe at first hand.

June ~ WI Walk. The weather was very unsettled for the time of year but nevertheless 21 members and friends met on Minchinhampton Common for coffee before setting out on our walk. The route took us through the centre of Minchinhampton and on to the picturesque Cotswold village of Box. The rain was fairly constant during the morning as we made our way down through the woodland and on to Nailsworth, where we spotted some beautiful wild orchids. From here we walked along the valley and through the pretty village of Watledge, before a steep climb up to Amberley. At

The Black Horse we had a welcome break for an excellent lunch. The stroll back across the common, via Tom Long's Post, was breezy but dry.



WI walk at Amberley, 22nd June 2012

~ At June's meeting Eunice Allcock, a volunteer who has worked for the Sidmouth Donkey Sanctuary for 32 years, came to tell us about the wonderful success of this charity started in Ottery St. Mary by Dr. Elisabeth Svendsen in 1973. At present they are responsible for 8,000 neglected donkeys, many coming from as far afield as Ireland. The Charity aims to re-home as many donkeys as possible, always in pairs, and then continues to monitor their care with annual inspections. Donkeys are particularly good with children and there are several sanctuaries around the country where they are particularly proud of their work with disabled children.

May ~ The May walk circled from the Dundas Aqueduct and gave us varied scenery along the Midford and Avon Valleys, then through three pretty villages. After a delicious lunch at the Hop Pole at Limpley Stoke we walked along the Kennett & Avon Canal and Somerset Coal Canal back to the Canal Visitor Centre.



WI walk at the Dundas Aquaduct, 18th May 2012

~ The May meeting dealt with the resolution to be debated at the WI Annual Meeting at the Royal Albert Hall at the end of the month. The resolution, calling for the employment of more midwives, was proposed by Pat Hunt. It was felt that, in the present climate, it was not a very good resolution but after some discussion a majority decided to give it support, with the added proviso of discretion for our delegate at the AGM. We then enjoyed light refreshments of cheese and pate whilst taxing our brains with a Diamond Jubilee quiz based on the 1950s.

April ~ WI walk, Monday 16th April: After coffee in the very busy Gordano Service Station, walkers and friends enjoyed a ramble through the Gordano Valley. Glorious bluebell and wild garlic carpeted woodland, then a steep climb brought us to Cadbury Camp Lane, with magnificent houses and gardens. A path between woodland and the M5 lead us on to the footbridge over the motorway. A picnic was enjoyed in the churchyard at St Michael's Church, Clapton in Gordano, with great views across to Wales. Stiles, kissing gates, wild flowers and woodland eventually brought us to Towerhouse Lane which led down to our start near Nailsea.



*Walk in the Gordano Valley, 16th April 2012
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

~ Our April speaker was Kathleen Danswan, an extremely talented needlewoman, who had been taught to embroider by her grandmother and then went on to learn dressmaking and tailoring at school. Her enthusiasm for sewing was so great that, when her children had grown up, she embarked on a number of college courses ranging from embroidery to highly advanced textile work where she also learnt her remarkable design skills. She brought a wonderful array of examples of her work with her, including the wedding dress made for her daughter, on which she had embroidered over 2000 beads and sequins, beautiful felt work inspired by her visits to Australia and North Africa, and the most exquisitely embroidered fish bowls. She is now an expert in her field, a member of the Guild of Embroiders and gives lectures and talks as far afield as the USA. Kathleen's enthusiasm for her subject was infectious and we all thoroughly enjoyed looking at her beautiful work.

March ~ It was a rather cloudy day for our March ramble in the Cotswolds, when 17 members and friends met at the Lechlade Garden Centre for coffee before driving to Southrop to begin our walk. We left the village across the fields and followed the River Leach for a while, where we spotted some clumps of bright yellow marsh marigolds. We left the river and walked across fields and through woodland until we rejoined the stream on the Hatherop Estate. After crossing a wonderful old slab

footbridge we headed for the villages of Eastleach Turville and Eastleach Martin where the daffodils were in full bloom. After visiting both the local churches we enjoyed an excellent lunch at The Victoria Inn before making our way back to our cars in beautiful sunshine.



*Cotswold walk, March 2012
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

~ The Annual Meeting of the WI was held on March 13th, when the officers for the coming year were elected. Viv Penney was thanked for all her hard work as President over the past three years and Jenny Hayne was elected to take her place. Those committee members standing down were thanked and the new members welcomed. The Denman Bursary was won by Christine Jago and the Betty Wiggins Rose Bowl was awarded to Jenny Hayne for the most competition points over the past year. Various Bye Laws were adopted and the Treasurer's Report and the Committee's Annual Report were both approved by the meeting.

February: ~ The coffee morning on Tuesday 28th February raised £161 in aid of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

~ Daffodils, primroses and an abundance of snowdrops were admired by the walkers during our Box walk. We climbed gently out of Box to the high plateau, where we stopped to view the area where "Larkrise to Candleford" was filmed; this was the subject of the talk given by Michael Pope at our February meeting. Lanes then brought us to a beautiful avenue of trees leading to Monkton Farleigh Manor, on through Monkton Farleigh village passing mellow stone cottages. Several field tracks brought us out on a lane and The Swan for our delicious lunch. Another

hour's walk followed, overlooking Box and the famous Box Tunnel, along the A4 and eventually to Devizes Road, the start of our walk.



*A view from the WI walk on 24th February '12
(Photo courtesy of Denise Skipp)*

~ Local farmer, Mike Pope, gave an interesting insight into the making of the television series *Lark Rise to Candleford*, much of which took place on location at his farm. With the aid of slides we were able to follow the building of the village of Lark Rise, from scaffolding frames to completed ancient cottages. It took approximately six weeks, as every detail was carefully planned, even down to the importing of 100 tons of top soil and large trees to develop the gardens. The farmhouse was pressed into use as the vicarage and when filming eventually began, crews were on site from eight in the morning until seven at night. The indoor sets were filmed at studios in Yate and the area around nearby Neston House was transformed into Candleford. For approximately three years it was like having a large, happy family living alongside the farmhouse and when the site was eventually cleared in 2011 the only thing kept to remind them of the popular television drama was the village well.

January: ~ At January's meeting there were truly harrowing "Memories of Internment by the Japanese". Our speaker, Barbara Sowerby had been born in Hong Kong in 1935 and had enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle with her parents and siblings until Christmas 1941, when the Second World War arrived in the Far East. As the Japanese began bombing Hong Kong, the family fled from their home and hid in various hotels until they were ultimately captured. As her father and brothers became prisoners of war in Japan, Barbara and her mother were sent to Stanley internment camp,

losing each other several times on the terrifying journey. Thus began a harrowing 4 years of captivity with thousands of others. From the age of 6 Barbara experienced extreme hunger, hardship, very limited schooling and the unending daily roll call to check for escapees.

Life eventually changed on August 15th 1945 when the guards disappeared, the camp fell silent and the remaining internees were able to welcome the arrival of the liberating British soldiers. Barbara aged 10 and weighing only 2½stone, set sail for England with her mother and was met at Liverpool by a kindly uncle from Somerset. The family was eventually re-united several months later and began to establish a new home in the West Country. Finally Barbara told us of her tireless, but successful work over the last twenty years campaigning for compensation for those who suffered so brutally at the hands of the Japanese.

~ WI Walk, Monday 16th January. A bright, crisp January morning was perfect for the Sapperton Walk. The walk started high up on the Cotswolds and dropped gently down the side of the valley with wonderful views. Then we walked onto the old Thames and Severn Canal towpath, which lead us to the entrance of the two mile long Sapperton Tunnel. A steep climb brought us into Sapperton and eventually to a wide, flat grassy "avenue" between trees on the Bathurst Estate. The main road lead us to a delicious lunch at The Crown at Frampton Mansell. Another half an hour walking high on the Cotswolds and our delightful and invigorating walk was complete.



*Walkers at the entrance to Sapperton Tunnel, 16th January 2012
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*